Reflections of Sister M. Febronia Boyer 1849-1870

([ ] indicate additions/corrections to help with accuracy)

Teresa Boyer, born Dec. 12, 1832 at Old Mines, baptized by Father Bolinere, C.M.

The Sisters of Loretto had asked Fr. Cotter, C.M., who succeeded Fr. Bolinere, to send them subjects and he intended that I should go to Loretto; but was advised by Bishop Barron to send me to the Sisters of St. Joseph.

On account of the distance from school I was deprived of the advantages of an education and was prepared for my First Communion by Father Misiman??? and confirmed by Archbishop Kenrick.

On Saturday, Sept. 2, 1848 at 1 P.M. Fr. Higginbottom took me to the convent where I met Sr. Prote [Protais] - the first Sister I had ever seen. Father asked them to give me something to eat and put me to bed. I had a lunch-meat, boiled peaches and bread in the old log wash house where the Sisters were peeling apples. Instead of going to bed, I helped them with their work. I was asked if my trunk was coming, but I assured them that I had all I possessed with me.

"Sister George was sick of a fever." We all slept in the same room, without curtains, chairs, or wash stands. One basin sufficed for all - the Sisters washing in turn.

My first Monday was spent in the wash-house where Sister Scholastica [Vasquez] d. 1859 had charge and gave each her task.

When I arrived, Mother Celestine had gone to Philadelphia, taking Sr. Martha as companion. The community at home consisted of Srs. M. Prote [Protais], Aloysius Cecelia, Mary Herman Ryan, Angela, Adelaide O'Brien, Stanislaus, Antoinette and Theodosia. Sister (George) received the Habit April 25, 1849.

When the Community found that I could read the Veni Creator they rejoiced thinking they had received a great scholar, and were disappointed to learn that I knew very little.

After the washing was finished, I scrubbed the Sisters' Room; but was not allowed to use soap. One of my companions who did so was told that because of her violation of Obedience and Poverty she must go to confession or leave the convent that night. Each one received on Monday the amount of soap she was allowed for her washing.

April 25, 1849, the Feast of the Pat. [Patronage] of St. Jos.[Joseph], three days after I received the Habit, I was given charge of the kitchen which was in the cellar and had a brick floor.

I had never seen a stove and knew not where to put the fire nor which part was the oven. I did the cooking and Sister Antoinette made the bread. Our breakfast consisted of cornbread made of meal, salt and water -- no soda; coffee, stew and bread and butter. For dinner we had a good soup, meat and one vegetable, unless we had a garden when we had vegetables in abundance. Each day M. Prote came to the kitchen and told us what to cook. (I also had charge of the Ref. [Refectory which means dining room] with 2 orphan girls who were in school from 8-11 and 1-4.)

*My first mission was St. Vincents in a little house on 7th St. with Srs. Teresa, Veronica, Stanislaus and Helena. Mother Delphine was the Superioress. Sr. Stanislaus died during my mission there and Mother D. felt her death very much.

During a rain so much water came into the kitchen that I had to walk on benches and dip it out. I became ill with a fever and was taken to Carondelet. Mother D. was afraid I would die.

When I recovered I again took charge of the kitchen in Carondelet. At night I was so tired that I let my feet hang out of bed to cool. In spite of all hardships no complaints were heard. Fatigue and privations seemed to be our greatest happiness. M. Prote was sent to Cocoake [Cahokia] and M. Philomena took her place. After this I was allowed but one stick of wood for cooking supper. However Obedience was blessed and all were satisfied with the meals.

In August of this year I was obliged to attend to my charge in the kitchen while making my Retreat.

(Mother St. John of Philadelphia was replaced by Mother Delphine and went to St. Paul with Srs. Francis Jos. [Francis Joseph Ivory], Philomena, and Scholastica [Vasquez].

*While at St. Vincents each Sister sawed a stick of wood every day. Because I was sleepy I was given charge of the bell. One morning it was rung too early. Mother discovered that it was not yet 4 o´clock when the Srs. were ready for Mass. The others returned to bed; but I, for penance, was obliged to sit in the Srs.´ Room until Mass time. I was so unfortunate as to break the first statue of St. Jos. which stood on an old stand in the Sisters´ Room.

When anything annoyed Mother D. she would strike her forehead and ask God for patience to bear with the Sisters. Her favorite aspiration was "Courage my soul, a few sacrifices, a few combats. The victory you shall gain and the crown shall be yours." (From St. Vincents I went back to Carondelet.) From Carondelet I was sent to Cheyoke [Cahokia] where I remained until it was time for my vows. M. Celestine intended that I should study during my stay in this place, but M. Prote would not permit me to learn to write and I was allowed to study only my Holy Rule, Formulary and Office. My vocation was well tried, but I was not blamed for not studying as it was not customary to complain of one older than yourself. I took my Vows in May and returned to my mission in June. There was a great flood that year. The waters of the Miss. R. [Mississippi River] reaching even to Carondelet.

The German Asylum was opened in July and I was sent there. M. Angela was the first superior. From here I again went to St. Vincents where I had charge of the cooking, washing, ironing, caring for the sick and making altar bread for the Church. A class of 4 or 5 colored children was taught in the kitchen which served as refectory and class-room. After 4 yrs. here, we moved into the new house on 8th St. where Mother Teresa was superior. Srs. Matthew, Lucy and I scrubbed the floors and our knees

became so sore we could not kneel for prayers.

M. Delphine came from Canada and took M. Teresa and a novice back with her. M. Teresa was succeeded by M. Helena whose place in the school was taken by Sr. John Baptist.

Mother Celestine now sent me to [Cahokia] with three novices. [1854] I was to teach prayers to the children and prepare them for their First Communion. We found a very sad state of affairs as there had been neither priest nor sisters here for 4 yrs. [?]

Bishop Van de Velde appointed an old French priest who could not speak a word of English to this place. The English-speaking Sisters were to be sent out to confession; but I must go to him. After 3 weeks he decided that it was unnecessary for them to do so since I could interpret their confessions. Of course Mother C [Celestine] would not listen to such a proposition and a priest was sent from Carondelet to hear our confessions. This provoked Father Wigg very much and he took revenge on us. Father Paris came to visit him and on being asked consented to give the Srs. H.C. [Holy Communion] Sunday A.M. without obliging them to fast until 10 or 11 o'clock.

Declaring he could stand it no longer Fr. Wigg went to

Mother C. to complain of me. He returned worse than he went.

On the day of First Communion he had my chair taken from the Church and I was compelled to kneel during the entire service which lasted about 3 hours. In his sermon he denounced me as an eye sore and threatened to deprive me of H.C. [Holy Communion] although I went by the advice of my confessor. However he never carried this threat into execution. He was taken ill and M.C. [Mother Celestine] sent me every day to offer my services to him. He always refused to let me do anything for him. I would ask "How do you feel Father? Oh so so but not like talking" or he would answer my knock for admission with "Come in if you want to, if not stay out." He was taken to the Hospital where he died. RIP. His clothes were ordered buried, the sexton dug the grace and I put the things into it (RIP too I suppose.)

For the next 6 weeks we had no Mass on Sunday; but a priest came from Carondelet on Thurs., heard our confessions and said Mass. Then the priest came out from the C. Bros. (Christian Brothers) said Mass, gave Benediction and returned the same day. Finally a priest was appointed to live there permanently. This year the Sisters and the priest had the fever and all left the place. We returned to the Mother House where I remained

about 7 yrs.

M. Angela read a letter from Archbishop Kenrick, giving Sr. St. John [Facemaz] full charge until Mother C. [Celestine] should recover or some one be appointed to take her place. Mother C died the following Sunday [6/7/1857]. The Archb. came to the funeral and said that he would return in 8 days for the election and ordered prayers said every day. On the appointed day the election was held and Mother Seraphine of St. Paul was chosen. While preparations were being made for her arrival the Archb. sent word that he would meet the Srs. in the Chapel on Thurs. He told the assembled Srs. that Mother S. had given good reasons for not accepting the office and he appointed Sr. St. John to fill the vacancy. This announcement caused great excitement. The Srs. screamed - threw themselves on the floor etc. - - - -. The Archb. left immediately - even ran from the Chapel and would not hear or see anyone.

Many of the Srs. were so dissatisfied that they went to other houses and some gave up their charges -- Commotion -- gnashing of teeth etc. I was given charge of the kitchen and the care of the orphans. All the Sisters excepting Sr. Michael and I made the retreat given by Fr. Convers. He tried so hard to reason with them and "bring them to their senses." Finally he said that all those who

rebelled against authority to leave. Many did so; but others who were not in favor of Mother St. John, remained. After Retreat Mother Helena from 8th St. [St. Vincent's] was elected Assistant with M. Angela and M. Felicite as counsellors and Sr. Clare was appointed Mistress of Novices. Mother Helena was replaced by Sr. Benedict; Sister George went to Wheeling and from there to St. Paul.

While M. Seraphine was Mrs. of Nov. [Mistress of Novices] the lay habit was first mentioned. It was first given, at her own request, to Sr. Edward from Wheeling who afterwards left the Community. The first Sisters to receive the lay habit were Srs. Dosithius, Edmund and Margaret.

Mother Celestine had said to me before she died that the spirit was growing weak owing to the failure of the Sisters to keep up the custom of remarking faults against the Rule. She said that those who do not wish to speak, do not desire correction.

The Community had no debts as she considered it better to do without necessaries than to go in debt. Her favorite aspiration was "All for the Creator, nothing for the Creature." Her dying words were "Sisters be prudent with the people of the world but always show the greatest respect to either rich or poor." The first conference I

ever heard was on the offense given to an outsider.

Mother C. was buried in the orchard by the Archb´s. orders. After 7 years she was removed to the graveyard. N.B. (There were only 2 Srs. buried in the Carondelet cemetery when I came to the convent.)

Mother Celestine suffered so much from prickly heat that the Sisters induced her to wear white sleeves; but when she noticed others doing the same she discontinued the use of them. She was devoted to the orphans and encouraged the Sisters by telling them that God would take special care of them when obliged to miss their prayers while with the orphans and that their education must be attended conscienciously.

A Sister Elizabeth accused M. Celestine of being a mother and for this reason she sent to Philadelphia to the priest.

After some time M. St. John told the Sisters that it was Mother Celestine´s intention to have the rule fixed. M. St. J. visited the houses and many of the superiors. Bishop Grace of St. Paul, and Archb. Kenrick met in Carondelet. The Archb. explained the meaning and the necessity of the approbation of the Rule.

Mother St. John made her 1st visit to Rome, taking as her companion Sr. Victorine who did not return to America. Mother brought 5 Srs. home with her. The next time she went to Rome M. Julia accompanied. 4 postulants and 1 novice came back with them. M. Seraphine of St. Paul was looking for some one to take her place and M. Helena was sent there. M. Seraphine died soon after. The first Srs. who came from France after Mother St. J.'s election were Srs. Agnes, Ambrosia, Hyacentia, Philomena [Philomene Billex]. Sr. Philomena opened the mission in Cohoes and died soon after.

Mother Helena returned from St. Paul, being replaced by Mother Stanislaus [Saul] of Oswego whose place was filled by M. Dominic.

A good trustworthy man and his wife helped with the work, tending the garden and milking the cows. M. Helena decided that the Srs. should do the milking and the man was discharged. Sister Victorine was the 1st Sister to milk a cow in Carondelet.

I was next sent to St. Mary's, Jasper Co., Ill. where I remained 2 yrs. There were 8 Srs. in that community with M. Julia as Sup. She was recalled to Carondelet, M. Ambrosia taking her place.

1865

I was called to St. Louis, arriving the day M. Helena was buried. My next mission was St. Bridget's where M. Justin was Superior. I was to have charge of the children, but Sr. Maria had a stroke of paralysis and I had to take care of her day and night for 3 mo.

I was again taken to Carondelet and given charge of the beds, the boarders' dormitory and the wash-house. Besides I was to see to the general cleaning, attend to the putting up and taking down of the stoves, and the giving out of the coal.

The Sisters at St. Paul were very discontented and while M. Stanislaus [Saul] was in St. L. they chose Sr. George for their Superior.

M. St. J. sent telegrams to each house, inviting any who chose to return to Carondelet and a few did come. M. George and Sr. Emerantia came down to attend the election and Sr. Antoinette went as Provincial to St. Paul while Sr. George was sent to Peoria and M. Mechtilda made Mrs. of Nov.[Mistress of Novices].

M. St. J. was re-elected and M. Agatha was elected Assistant. Sr. Clement became Sr. Assistant. M. St. J. ordered me to give M. Agatha all the keys except those of the coal cellar, the stove-room and the wash-house.

Mother St. John promised statues of Our Lady of LaSalette and of St. Teresa if the Holy Rule was approved.

A law having been passed forbidding owners to allow their cows to roam around, the Sisters began to look for a place and Nazareth was chosen. The first Sisters who went there were Srs. Vincentia, M. Joseph Bray and Sophia. The frame house was built and the Srs. went out collecting from the farmers who were most generous. Those who had no money sent their teams to help with the hauling. One man hauled all the sand, another supplied the rock, another brought water from the creek. In return they were to have the privilege of hearing Mass in case of sickness, old age or bad roads. A school was opened and generously supported by the people.

Sister Dorothy planted the trees are now growing around the house. The place is being laid out now just as it was then planned. Fr. St. Cyr planted the trees in the cemetery and the novices, one of whom was M. Assistant [Agnes Rossiter], watered and cared for them.

The Sisters who collected for this place were Srs. Mary Anne, Clement, St. Jos. and Febronia. Sr. St. Joseph reminded the Srs. from her death-bed of the promises they had made to the people and that it was a matter of Justice that they be kept.

Fr. St. Cyr said the first Mass in the little frame house and came to be the Chaplain when the house was finished. The first server here became a Franciscan.

While M. St. John & M. Agatha were East Sr. St. Benedict & I were sent to Troy where I remained 10 month acting as Chapter Counsellor and Procurator as well as having charge of the kitchen.

M. Gonzaga was Provincial. The assistant, Sr. Evangelist, was ordered to Salina and I was appointed to take her place.

To be continued in our next -

THE NEXT WILL BE POSTPONED AS LONG AS POSSIBLE.
by request of the proofreader

Sister Febronia (Boyer)

I entered the novitiate in Carondelet in 1848. There were only six professed sisters there, and six novices, namely;

M. Celestine (Pommerel)	Novices
Sister Proti(Protais)	Sr. Angela (Hanner)
" M. Rose (Marsteller)	Sr. George (Bradley)
" Cecilia (Renou?)	Sr. Adelaide (O'Brien)
" M. Herman (Ryan?)	Sr. Scholastica (Vasques)
" Aloysius	Sr. Stanislaus (Saul)
	Sr. Antoinette (Narberhaus)

Sisters M. Rose, Cecilia, Mary Herman and Angela taught in the Academy, Sr. Adelaide the day school, Sr. Stanislaus had charge of the orphans, Sr. Aloysius the kitchen, Sr. Scholastica the sewing, Sr. Antoinette the baking and milking. In winter she raised the bread in the kitchen and baked it in the little French oven in the yard. Some days she baked twice. The bread was always good for she prayed all the time she was working at it.

We had five postulants I being the youngest. Three took the habit on the Feast of St. Teresa, one went home. Those who recd. the habit were Sisters Augustine (Spencer), Genevieve (Farrell), the latter died during novitiate, and Sr. Gertrude (McGrane).

A part of our table service consisted of blue bowls, no saucers, the bowls of the boarders was white, the sick had yellow bowls. On fast days and Saturdays we took supper a half hour later, we had soup for dinner and supper, the Superioress served the soup to each in turn.

Recreation terminated at half-past seven, those who taught prepared their lessons, all the others to study the prayers and office. From eight to half past catechism was taught. Each Sister asked questions. At half past night prayers.

Each one ranked according to the time of entrance into religion, and a certain deference had to be shown them by the juniors. The seniors' duty was to correct any faults they saw committed against the rule by the juniors, and if they were unfaithful to this duty they themselves were admonished in defi for their want of zeal. Thus was the spirit of humility and charity inculcated.

Every Thursday evening the Superioress knelt at the Chapel door and kissed the feet of the Sisters as they passed out.

The community needed a man to attend to the many outside affairs, the cows, garden, etc. It was difficult to find a man; finally a Mr. Lang and his little son came from

Germany where in his younger days he had studied for the priesthood, and was known to our Chaplain who recommended him to M. Celestine. He attended to his work well, everything was in fine order, we had plenty of vegetables, etc. Later on he brought his wife and daughters from Germany and they lived in the convent yard. He also played the organ for Benediction and Mass, he and his daughters sang.

The only light we had was in the Community Room! (by which the Sisters studied). Was one home-made candle and that in a home-made candlestick.